

THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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DOUBLEDAY'S CHILDREN.

BY DUTTON COOK,

AUTHOR OF "YOUNG MR. NIGHTINGALE," "HOBSON'S CHOICE," &c. &c.

BOOK II. THE CONFESSION OF DORIS.

CHAPTER XVII. WHAT NICK AND BASIL THOUGHT OF IT.

"WHAT I think is," said Nick, a reflective or a displeased frown denting his forehead, "that you have been in too great a hurry."

"You think I am too young to be married?"

"No, I don't say that."

"That I might have secured a more eligible husband?"

"I won't say that, either. But you ought not to have acted so entirely on your own responsibility. You seem to forget that there are other people in the world besides yourself—I mean people to whom you owe some deference."

"You mean yourself, Nick?"

"Well, yes; myself chiefly. You see I am older than you, and, of course, I have had very much more experience of life, and of the world, than you; and I am the head of the family. I feel that I haven't been treated properly. Really you've acted as though I did not exist. You make all your arrangements; you decide to do this, that, and the other, without the slightest regard to me, or to my opinion in the matter. I am not even spoken to on the subject. You don't take the trouble to communicate to me a word of your intentions. I am left to discover by the merest accident that you are engaged to be married. Now I don't call that treating me properly."

"I am very sorry, Nick; it was an oversight."

"Yes; but such oversights ought not to occur. I like things to be done regularly, and formally, and considerately. I am not at all sure that Mr. Leveridge ought not to have addressed himself to me in the first instance. I rather think he should have ascertained, before paying his addresses to you, that his doing so would be quite agreeable to me. It is, I fancy, the rule in these cases, before taking any active steps, to consult the heads of families, and ascertain their views and wishes."

"Yes. But though you're a few years older, Nick, that does not make you my legal guardian, or give you any distinct power over me."

"I don't know about being your legal guardian. Perhaps not. Still it ought not to be forgotten—you ought not to forget—that I am the eldest, and that respect should be paid to me on that account. Besides, I suppose my opinion is worth having, especially on such a subject as this."

"No doubt, Nick. But have you anything to say against Mr. Leveridge?"

"Well, I don't know that I have."

"Am I wrong to accept him?"

"I won't say that. I think Mr. Leveridge is a very good sort of man."

"I think so too. It's true that he is old and ugly."

"He's not young, of course. I don't see that he's ugly, at least not very ugly."

"Do you think he's like Punch?"

"No, I don't see it. I couldn't see it years ago, when Basil first mentioned it. It was Basil's nonsense; he's too fond of nonsense. Mr. Leveridge's face is rather red, perhaps, and his features are large;

but they are not a bad shape. Besides, it doesn't much matter what a man's like. Women, of course, ought to be good-looking; with men it does not much signify."

"You would not marry a woman who was very old and plain?"

"I wouldn't."

"Not if she was very rich?"

"Not if she was ever so rich. But what's the good of asking me such questions? I'm going to marry Catalina."

"You are? Is it a settled thing? She's accepted you?"

"There you are again in a desperate hurry. It's a settled thing so far as I'm concerned, but not more than that. She has not accepted me, because in point of fact she's never been exactly asked to accept me. But of course she will accept me when the proper time arrives."

"When will that be, Nick?"

"I can't fix the date, if that's what you mean. But we're both young; and, by-and-by, I shall get on, and be in receipt of a salary upon which I can afford to marry. Then I shall ask Catalina to marry me."

"You take for granted that she'll accept you?"

"Why not?"

I could not answer him. I thought he was talking absurdly. But, after all, he might be right; she might accept him when, as he said, the proper time arrived. He was very handsome; and, if he was dull, he did not know it; and he was wonderfully resolute and self-reliant.

"And you think it doesn't matter much what a man is like?" I said presently.

"It ought not to matter. But, of course, there are many foolish women in the world, and some of them are quite capable of refusing a man—a thoroughly eligible person otherwise—simply because they don't like the shape of his nose, or the colour of his hair. I call that disgraceful nonsense."

"But you, Nick, you wouldn't marry a woman if her nose was of an ugly shape, or her hair was carrotty?"

"That's different. A man only chooses someone he likes, or that takes his fancy for some reason or another. He asks for what he wants. Women can't do that, you know; it wouldn't be allowed for a moment. They have to sit still, and wait patiently, until an offer is made to them."

"But they are not bound to accept the offer when it is made?"

"Well, no; perhaps they are not abso-

lutely bound to accept it. But they ought to have very good reasons to show for rejecting it. For, you know, a woman ought to get married; it's her business to get married. I may almost say that that's what she's sent into the world for; and she ought to be very careful how she throws away a chance of obtaining a husband. There are not so very many husbands to be had, after all. They say every woman has a chance of a husband once in her life, at any rate. But we must not forget that there are many more women than men in the world. So, a woman ought to think twice before she says No. It's really almost her duty to say Yes. She mustn't set up for being so very particular."

"Well, you can't blame me, Nick; I haven't been so very particular."

"I don't blame you, except for being in such a desperate hurry. Of course, you are young and inexperienced, and did not think much about what you were doing. I approve of your saying Yes; but there's a sort of decency to be observed on these occasions. You were not obliged to decide on the instant. It would have looked better—more, what I should call, modest, you know, if you'd required a little time to consider. Of course I am taking it for granted that Mr. Leveridge did not bind you down to give him an answer then and there, all in a minute. I feel sure that he would have waited while you consulted your friends and relations; by which I mean myself chiefly."

"Well, Nick, I'm sorry it has so happened; but, as you have not really any objection to offer, I can't think 'my desperate hurry,' as you call it, is of much consequence."

"No; only there's a principle in these things which should not be lost sight of. I have not any objection to offer. I only wanted an opportunity of objecting if I had thought it advisable to object; but I have nothing to say against Mr. Leveridge. As we agreed just now, he's not young, and you consider him ugly. He's not handsome, certainly—we can't all be handsome. I can admit, indeed, that he's what I should call plain. But he's very well off; and, of course, that has to be considered. I had rather he wasn't an artist."

"You object to artists?"

"Well, I think artists are rather open to objection. They're not tradesmen exactly, and yet they are not quite profes-

sional men. And there's something about them and their ways of going on that isn't quite respectable, I always think. I don't profess to understand much about art and pictures; but all their fussing and muddling with brushes, and paint-pots, and varnish, seems to me rather childish and contemptible."

"But Mr. Leveridge is really a famous artist."

"So I'm told. And they say he sells his pictures for very large prices—for hundreds of pounds sometimes, which quite proves to me that there are a lot of very foolish people in the world. For my part, I cannot say I care about his works."

"You disapprove of them?"

"Well, if you ask me, I think them quite detestable. I don't think such things ought to be allowed. It's very well to talk about high art, and beauty of form, and so on; but while people wear clothes, they ought to be painted with them on. People are not always bathing. Nature, indeed! I'm sure it's much more natural to be dressed than to be undressed. I do hope, when you're married to Mr. Leveridge, Doris, you'll try and make him see the error of his way, and paint in a different way."

It was difficult to resist laughing; but Nick was as grave as a judge.

"I'm sure of your blessing, then, when I'm married, Nick?"

"Oh, certainly," he said with a certain solemnity of manner. "I shall be very happy to give you my blessing. And I shall make a point, at whatever inconvenience to myself, of being present in church to give you away. And while I'm upon the subject, I may say, Doris, that I should very much like to offer you something handsome and appropriate in the way of a wedding-gift. But, as you know, my means are not considerable. I do manage to put by a trifle now and then, and I've saved a small sum out of my salary. But then, that's for a particular object. I can't help looking forward to the time of my marriage with Catalina, when of course I shall want money to buy furniture, and things of that kind. Still I fully intend to give you something worth having, you know, Doris, even though its value may not be inordinate. I thought of a nice silk dress, and I daresay I could get one at wholesale price, for I've friends in the silk-mercantile and Manchester warehouse line of business. I should like to get a good, stout, serviceable silk. I don't

so much care about the colour, or the pattern; and, if it should be a little out of fashion, as to that I don't suppose it would be of so much consequence. You may rely upon my doing something for you of that kind, and I honestly wish I could do more. For I should not like it to be said, that your family did nothing for you upon such an occasion as your marriage. It's true you're marrying a rich man; but that's no reason why your friends and relations should not help you as far as they can. And now, I think I've said all I've got to say, and so I'll go."

Thereupon Nick kissed me with calm, and sober, and rather patronising affection, studied his watch carefully, drew on his gloves deliberately, and—went on his way.

Presently Basil arrived, looking pale—but then he usually looked pale—and somewhat worried. His manner displayed considerable nervous irritation.

"I've heard of this thing quite by chance, Doris," he said quickly.

"Nick has been telling me that I ought to have formally communicated the matter to my friends and relations, and especially to him, as the head of the family."

"I won't stop to discuss that. Nick is absurd, of course. He's been here, you say? Well, he's right-minded enough usually. He told you that this marriage ought not to be?"

"No, Basil, he said nothing of that."

Basil looked disappointed.

"It is a thing we might have foreseen," he said moodily. "It threatened, I may say, from the first. Not that I charge him with calculation in the matter. I do think he meant only, simply and honestly, to be kind. He was without plan or premeditation, or *arrière pensée*. Yet, what has happened was sure to happen. How could he be near you, Doris, day after day, and not love you? He could not but admire you, and he could not but love you. For his age—I don't know that age is so sure a defence against folly, as the world believes. A fool's cap too often clothes a gray head."

"You are angry, Basil?"

"Yes, I am angry, in a weak and helpless way. For I can but be weak and helpless in such a matter. Doris, be frank with me. Must this marriage be?"

"It seems so. I suppose it must."

"Don't, for Heaven's sake, be listless, or apathetic, or fatuous about it. My sister, you don't need to be told that your life's happiness is at stake."

"What have you to say against Mr. Leveridge?"

"Nothing, except that he should not be your husband. You don't pretend to say that you love him?"

"I don't pretend to say that I love him."

"You marry him because we are so poor?"

"Perhaps."

"That is the real curse of poverty! It tempts us to do unworthy, ignoble things to become rich. Doris, we can be poor and yet preserve our self-respect, however much we may forfeit the respect of others. For the world does not, it cannot perhaps, afford, to respect the poor."

"You forget, Basil, how kind Mr. Leveridge has been to us."

"I don't question his kindness. I shall never forget it."

"But you forget how long I have been dependent upon him."

"Too long, since this is to be the end of it. But it seemed so natural a thing, that he should hasten to befriend and assist us in our hour of keen trial. He was so much older; he belonged to a past generation; he was more than old enough to be a father to us; and had been—there is something absurd in the very mention of it now—the lover or the admirer of our mother before we were born. How could we think, when he offered himself as your guardian, that he was to present himself by-and-by as your husband? Doris, this thing makes me mad when I think of it."

"I'm very sorry that it should distress you, Basil."

"I jested about it when it seemed at a distance. Now, when it is really at hand, I own I am fairly ashamed. My sister, you believe that I love you?"

"I am sure that you do."

"You cannot be happy as this man's wife."

"Is that so sure?"

"Well, I can't deny that the ordinary and conventional means of happiness and comfort will be yours. So far as food, and raiment, and matters of that kind go, you will be well cared for. Nor would I do Mr. Leveridge injustice. I would not refuse homage to his many excellent qualities. He is kind to a fault; he is of tender nature; he is not capable of an unworthy thought. There is much, I may say, that seems to me ennobling in the occupation of his life, even though he may

be disposed to lay stress rather upon its mechanical than its intellectual conditions. Still, Doris, I cannot bring myself to believe that Mr. Leveridge should be your husband, that even any moderate proportion of happiness can possibly result from your marriage with him."

"Yours is a gloomy view of the case, Basil."

"Indeed, my view is more gloomy than I like to say. Even if you love no other, Doris—and that is so?"

"That is so."

"Still I must think that the time will come, when you will feel a cruel void in your heart, unfilled by your husband, or by your love for him. For of course you do not, you cannot, pretend to say that you love him. Does a woman, I wonder, tease herself with no vision of an ideal husband, as a man tortures himself with musing over an ideal wife? And when the ideal takes form and flesh, and becomes a real and breathing creature—what then?"

"But, Basil, it is folly to talk like this. What alternative is open to me? Say I break off this intended marriage; what then?"

"My sister, it is very hard to decide. I do so wish you to be happy. Yet on which side does happiness lie? Who can tell me? For alternative there is only this. Quit Mr. Leveridge; come to me. Share my life of poverty. I live the life of an artisan; I am content to earn bread and cheese, and to subsist upon what I earn. The times are very hard. My life is one almost of misery. All I can do is to offer to share it with you. Say you will entrust yourself to me and I will work myself to a thread paper, my fingers to the bone, but I will earn enough for the subsistence of both of us. This is a wretched offer to make to you. No one knows its wretchedness better than I do. Still, Doris, it is all I can do at present. The future may have happier days in store for me. Heaven grant that may be so. And I am not without hope of winning success, and even prosperity, in the days to come. But just now my life is what I have said. You have heard my offer. You shrink from it; it offends, it frightens you. Be it so then. I can do no more. God bless you, my sister. Be happy, if you can, in the way you have chosen. I hope, indeed, that happiness may be possible to you as the wife of Mr. Leveridge. Good-bye, dearest."

There were tears in his eyes as he stooped

and kissed me. And indeed our tears mingled literally. For his words were spoken in so tender and sympathetic a tone that I could not help crying like a child. And so he left me.

OLD FRENCH ACTORS.

PRÉVILLE.

It would be no easy task to determine the relative superiority of the three great tragedians who, at various periods, have illustrated the stage of the *Comédie Française*, Baron, Lekain, and Talma. With regard to the two first, we must be contented to rely on the appreciation handed down to us by their contemporaries, and, though many still exist who have known and admired the last of the trio, yet even these, however enthusiastically they may extol his merits, can, of course, only compare them with those of other actors they may have seen, without any reference beyond that of mere hearsay to his celebrated predecessors. Each of the three, indeed, appears to have possessed his own individuality, and to have attained his eminent position by the sheer force of genius, unaided by the example of any model worthy of imitation; the decease of Baron and the birth of Lekain having taken place in the same year, 1729, and the latter dying in 1778, at which date Talma was hardly fifteen years old. We will therefore conclude that each has fairly a right to be considered the best representative of tragedy during the period in which he lived, and being unable to assign to either the palm of supreme excellence, divide it equitably and impartially between them.

In comedy, the case is different; rich as the French theatre has always been in this particular speciality, it is acknowledged that, since its establishment in the *Hôtel de Bourgogne* to the present day, its annals record the name of no actor who has enjoyed during a career of upwards of thirty years a larger share of public favour than the subject of our notice, or whose claim to supremacy is so universally unquestioned and undisputed. Inseparably connected with the most important dramatic novelties of his time, endowed with a versatility enabling him to personate, with equal perfection, the entire range of comic characters from Molière to Beaumarchais, Prévillle has left behind him a reputation which has become proverbial, and which none of

his contemporaries, with the single exception of his still greater rival, our own inimitable Garrick, have succeeded in attaining.

Pierre Louis Dubus (the name of Prévillle having been subsequently assumed by him) was born in Paris, September 17, 1721, and received his first rudiments of education at the Abbey of St. Antoine, his father occupying the post of steward to the Abbess, Madame de Bourbon. Finding the paternal severity, and the extreme parsimony which regulated the expenses of the household, little to his taste, our hero, in concert with his four brothers, decamped at an early age from the family abode in the *Rue des Mauvais Garçons*, determined to exchange the strict discipline of a semi-monastic training for the uncontrolled delights of liberty. How his brethren fared is not stated; they probably discovered that penniless freedom has its inconveniences, and, perhaps, after a few weeks' experience of "*la vache enragée*," ultimately returned home. Pierre Louis, however, steadily pursued his idea of independence; and as soon as the trifling sum of money he had amassed son by son was exhausted, courageously began life as a mason.

A month or two of hard toil and almost nominal pay sufficed to convince him, that the constant handling of bricks and mortar was more laborious than profitable; and we find him ere long copying deeds in a notary's office, and already combating a vague leaning towards the theatre. This inclination, however, encouraged by divers visits to the gallery of the *Comédie Italienne*, grew stronger and stronger, until, at length, abandoning the legal profession with infinitely more satisfaction than he had felt on entering it, and turning a deaf ear to his father's angry remonstrances, he resolved to follow his own bent, and become an actor. Having once made up his mind as to his future profession, he set to work manfully, and by dint of persevering study under the practical superintendence of the clever comedian Dehesse, was in due time qualified to join a company of strolling players, earning a precarious livelihood in the smaller towns and even villages of France.

Step by step, although by slow degrees, he gradually improved his position; those who had seen him act mentioned him to others, and the success of the young débutant having been finally reported by certain influential amateurs to the manager

of the Dijon theatre, he immediately engaged him. Unfortunately for Prévile, the inhabitants of that mustard-producing locality, totally insensible to anything approaching finesse or delicacy of expression, had a peculiar relish for broad farce; and, in order to please them, exaggeration in its wildest form was indispensable. The new comer was therefore compelled in self-defence to sacrifice his artistic scruples to the Boeotian propensities of his audience, and would probably have eventually degenerated into a mere buffoon, had not a timely and advantageous opening at Rouen rescued him from this degradation.

The habit, however, of over-acting had so grown upon him that he was unable even there to restrain his mirth-provoking sallies within the bounds of good taste; more especially as the public of the Norman capital were, as regarded refinement, not a whit in advance of his Dijon patrons, but encouraged him by their applause to persist in what he himself felt to be a downright desecration of his art. One spectator alone, a little hunchback, had the courage to dissent from the general verdict. Invariably occupying a seat in the same box, and never missing a single performance, he continually, while Prévile was on the stage, held his thumb downwards as a sign of disapprobation, after the manner of the frequenters of the Roman amphitheatre, when the vanquished gladiator in vain implored their mercy. This strange pantomime puzzled our hero, and he resolved to ascertain the motive of his critic's displeasure; nor had he long to wait for an explanation. One evening, after the curtain had fallen, the little hunchback came behind the scenes, and addressed a few complimentary remarks to each of the actors in turn, with the single exception of Prévile, who, annoyed at the slight cast upon him, boldly asked the visitor why he had passed him over in so contemptuous a fashion. The hunchback eyed him for a moment in silence, then taking him aside, said in a low tone; "Nature has been more than ordinarily bountiful to you, but you are doing all in your power to render her gifts of no avail. If you wish to know what I mean, come and see me to-morrow, and I will tell you." Such a chance of unravelling the mystery was not to be neglected, and Prévile was punctual at the rendezvous. The interview lasted some time, and at its conclusion the actor, convinced that he had hitherto

chosen the wrong path, determined in future to adopt the suggestions of his friendly adviser, and reform his style altogether. On his next appearance, his altered manner, and studied sobriety of tone and gesture, were evidently not to the taste of the audience, who looked at each other in amazement, and seemed more inclined to hiss than applaud; the little hunchback, on the contrary, enraptured with the docility of his pupil, evinced his satisfaction by repeated manifestations of approval. As, however, notwithstanding his mentor's enthusiasm, it was impossible for Prévile to risk displeasing the entire public for the sake of a solitary individual, he was reluctantly compelled during the remainder of his stay at Rouen to return to his original mode of acting; but he never forgot the lesson he had received, and in after life frequently referred to it as one of the most fortunate incidents in his career.

From Normandy he went to Lyons, and while exercising the twofold functions of manager and actor in that city, was summoned to Paris, where the death of Poisson had left a vacancy in his particular line of parts at the Théâtre Français. A month later, September 20, 1753, he appeared there as Crispin in the *Légataire*; and, in spite of the popularity of his predecessor, at once satisfied the connoisseurs that they were not likely to be losers by the change.

The difference, indeed, between the two artists was sufficiently striking; Poisson, ugly and awkwardly built, but endowed with so marvellously comic a face that his very aspect threw the house into convulsions of laughter, had adopted a habit of stuttering, the effect of which, added to his singular physiognomy, was irresistibly droll; his humour was broad, unctuous and genial, but wholly wanting in delicacy and refinement. His successor, on the other hand, had the advantage of a pleasing countenance, and a slight but well-proportioned figure; the easy grace of his movements, and the infinite variety of expression in voice, look, and gesture, contrasted not unfavourably with the shambling gait and indistinct delivery of the former Crispin, and any doubt the Parisians might still have entertained as to their relative merits, was speedily set at rest by the exclamation of an amateur in the pit: "*Poisson est mort, vive Prévile!*"

To this important event in theatrical

circles, Dorat, in his poem, *La Déclamation*, has the following apropos allusion :

Poisson, qui si longtemps amusa tout Paris,
Descendait dans la tombe escorté par les Ris.
Prévile vient, parait ; il ranime la scène,
Et Momus aisément fait oublier Silène.
Prévile ! Ennuis, fuyez ! fuyez, Soucis affreux !
Son nom est un signal pour rallier les Jeux.
Il reçut le grelot des mains de la Folie,
Et bégayant encore, il vola vers Thalie.

A similar triumph to that obtained on his first essay by the new recruit attended his successive personations of Crispin in *Les Folies Amoureuses*, and Sganarelle in *Le Médecin malgré lui* ; and subsequently in *Le Mercure Galant*, where he displayed his rare versatility in six different characters, the enthusiasm of the public knew no bounds, and he was unanimously pronounced to be the most accomplished actor that had hitherto trod the French stage. On October 20th he performed in the last-named piece before Louis the Fifteenth, and so enchanted the monarch that he immediately exempted him from any further début, directing the *Maréchal de Richelieu*, the lord in waiting on the occasion, to announce to him at once his reception among the *Comédiens du Roi*.

Two anecdotes, relating to Larissolle, one of the six characters in question, are worth recording. A soldier in the *Prince de Conti's* cavalry regiment, passing a few weeks on leave in Paris, happened to see Prévile play *Maugrebleu*, a trooper of his own stamp, in *Les Vacances des Procureurs*, and was so delighted with his evening's entertainment, that as soon as the curtain had fallen he found his way behind the scenes, and grasping the astonished Prévile by the hand, embraced him with the most cordial demonstrations of affection. "Ah ! Monsieur Prévile," he exclaimed, "if I knew anyone inclined to do you an injury, I would snuff him out like a candle !" Our hero, as in duty bound, thanked his new acquaintance for this highly flattering offer, and they parted with mutual assurances of goodwill. A few days after, the bills announced the repetition of *Le Mercure Galant* ; and the trooper, or to give him his right name, Jolibois, took his station in the pit among the first, and awaited with anxiety the entrance of his friend. As the piece progressed his enthusiasm increased, until the moment when Prévile reappeared in the uniform of Larissolle ; Jolibois stared as if he could not believe his eyes. "Ah, le chien !" he cried, rushing out of the theatre in a transport of despair ; "he

has deserted from the cavalry, and enlisted in the infantry !"

The other incident occurred at Fontainebleau during the representation of the same comedy. A sentinel, placed at one of the side scenes, perceiving an apparently drunken soldier with a pipe in his mouth on the point of passing him, strove in the most urgent manner to prevent him from advancing. "For heaven's sake, comrade," he whispered, "keep back, unless you wish me to be marched off to prison." Larissolle, or rather Prévile, with some difficulty succeeded in forcing his way on to the stage, where his entry was the signal for a tumultuous burst of applause, a dénouement certainly little expected by the conscientious sentry.

From the date of his reception to his final retirement, a period of thirty-three years, this unrivalled comedian not only sustained with a success hitherto unexampled the leading comic parts in the ancient répertoire, but created an inconceivable variety of types in the works of contemporary authors. He was the original Figaro in *Le Barbier de Séville*, Antoine in *Sedaine's Philosophe sans le savoir*, Géronte in *Goldoni's Bourru Bienfaisant*, and Brid'oison in *Le Mariage de Figaro*. Whatever he attempted was a fresh addition to the long list of his triumphs, and it is difficult to imagine how the same actor could represent with such consummate ability characters so entirely opposite, as Freeport in *Voltaire's Ecossaise*, Stukely in *Saurin's Beverley*, and Michau in *Collé's Partie de Chasse*. The last-named writer speaks of him as being "admirable, astonishing, even for those whose age renders them less susceptible of astonishment." Horace Walpole alludes to him in 1774 as "always perfection ;" and the accomplished painter, Madame Lebrun, has the following passage concerning him in her *Recollections*. "His acting was so true to nature, that those who have since tried to imitate him have only succeeded in producing an imperfect caricature." But, perhaps, the most exact and appropriate eulogy of his talent is comprised in the subjoined extract from the *Memoirs* of his comrade Fleury. "Prévile was a model for actors, as Mademoiselle Dangeville had been for actresses. A graceful exterior, profound intelligence, gaiety, sensibility, and vivacity, he possessed them all. He acted comedy as Molière wrote it."

And yet, notwithstanding his popularity, and the consciousness of having fairly

earned it, Prévile was not wholly satisfied with the result of his labours; far from being contented with the laurels he had already attained, he perpetually aspired to a still greater degree of perfection; and ascribed what he considered his comparative inefficacy to the over-indulgence of the public. One evening, when surrounded by a circle of admirers in the foyer of the Théâtre Français, he expressed his regret that hissing was no longer allowed in the pit. "I have witnessed more than one instance," he said, "where an actor has been applauded, when he ought to have been soundly hissed. Nay, I even confess to have myself occasionally indulged in buffoonery for the sake of exciting a laugh. If the first time I so far forgot myself, some well-meaning spectator had treated me as I deserved, the lesson would not have been lost, and I should now be a better comedian than I am."

In M. de Pixérécourt's celebrated collection of autographs, dispersed many years ago, one of the most curious items was a document in four pages folio, entirely in Prévile's handwriting, and embodying his ideas how the character of *Tartuffe* should be played. The result of these reflections may be given in his own words: "Il faut jouer *Tartuffe* comme Molière l'a fait. Est-ce un ecclésiastique? Non. Molière était trop sage pour attaquer ce corps respectable. Est-ce un homme de robe? Non. La même raison s'y oppose. Est-ce un bourgeois? Non encore. C'est un personnage général. Il est donc défendu à un acteur d'affecter à ce rôle une sorte de condition, et de le vêtir en conséquence."

From this it will be seen that Prévile, in the midst of his multifarious occupations, found ample leisure for the practical study of his art; a portion of his time was also devoted to the instruction of the younger actors, and his successor Dazincourt—of whom he is reported to have said that he was "an excellent comedian"—relates an example of the wholesome severity of his counsels. "I had just left the stage, and the applause of the public was still ringing in my ear, when I met Prévile, looking more than usually serious. 'Are you aware of what you have been doing?' he asked; to which I replied, that I had endeavoured to act my very best. He shook his head. 'You are writing your name on sand,' he said; 'extravagant gestures and false intonations may attract the vulgar, but they are repugnant to the man of taste. Re-

member, that a smile of approbation from a real connoisseur is worth all the inane enthusiasm of the multitude; the one is a tribute to your intelligence, the other, a rebuke to your folly.'"

Unlike many of his fellow-performers, he was always ready to sacrifice his own individual interest to the general effect of the ensemble, and bestowed as much attention on the personation of an insignificant part, as if the entire piece depended upon it; whatever character might be assigned him, he carefully analysed it before coming to rehearsal, and, on being cast for *Freeport* in *Voltaire's Ecossaise*, suggested several alterations to the author, which the latter, convinced of their utility, adopted without hesitation.

Beaumarchais had been most anxious that Prévile should follow up his success in the *Barbier de Séville*, by undertaking *Figaro in La Folle Journée* (better known as *Le Mariage de Figaro*); the increasing infirmities of age, however, compelled him to decline it in favour of his pupil Dazincourt, and content himself with the relatively unimportant part of *Brid'oison*. To this Beaumarchais alludes in a letter dated March 31st, 1784, nearly a month previous to the first representation of the comedy. "We were both mistaken, old friend," he says; "I was afraid that you might retire before Easter, and you imagined that the *Marriage of Figaro* would never be played. . . . Two years ago, my friend Prévile would have ensured the success of my five acts; and, even now, the charm conferred by him on a smaller part will make every one regret that he does not play the leading one." We may add, apropos of this famous piece, that, after the opening performance, Prévile ran up to *Mademoiselle Contat*, the *Suzanne* of the night, and cordially embraced her, exclaiming, "This is my first and only infidelity to *Mademoiselle Dangeville*!"

Lekain often reproached Prévile for his carelessness in financial matters, and urged him to economise, and retire from the stage, as soon as he had amassed a sufficient independence; enjoining him at the same time not to count on the durability of popular favour, and reminding him that those who applauded him to-day would be equally inclined to hiss him to-morrow, if he failed to amuse them. Prévile acknowledged the wisdom of this advice; but such was his natural easiness of disposition, and inability to resist the impulse of the moment, that he wholly neglected to follow it, and

spent his salary as he received it, less, it must be owned, for his own enjoyment, than for that of others. His servant, who lived with him for thirty years, and who, luckily for Prévile, was honesty itself, had no regular wages, but asked him for money as he wanted it. This singular personage considered himself as part of the family, and was so extremely jealous of his master's reputation, that, on one occasion when the latter was invited to a social gathering, he gravely put his veto upon it, saying, "Monsieur forgets that we play the *Barbier de Séville* and the *Mercure Galant* to-morrow; monsieur must be careful, or we shall not do ourselves justice."

The following instance of Prévile's good-natured simplicity in worldly matters is too characteristic to be omitted. A provincial actor out of engagement, named St. Amand, came to him one evening and solicited a lodging for the night. His request was immediately granted, and finding his quarters to his taste, he deferred his departure from day to day, much to the annoyance of Madame Prévile, who warned her husband that he would never get rid of the unwelcome guest. "Poor fellow!" he replied, "let him remain as long as he likes!" Seventeen years later, St. Amand was still an inmate of the identical room in which he had been installed on the night of his arrival, and only left it on his succeeding to a small inheritance, which obliged him to quit Paris.

Prévile's retirement took place in 1786, the piece selected for his farewell performance being Collé's *Partie de Chasse*, in which the veteran, although sixty-five years of age, acted Michau with the gaiety and spirit of his youthful days. Shortly after he took up his abode at Senlis, where he enjoyed a pension from the *Comédie Française*, and another from Louis the Sixteenth, amounting together to nearly five thousand livres. This separation, however, from the theatre he had so long and so gloriously illustrated by his talent was not definitive; in 1791 his comrades, already suffering from the effects of the Revolution, and straining every nerve to attract the public, rightly judged that the name of Prévile would still possess its wonted influence on the receipts, and despatched Fleury to Senlis with a petition signed by the united members of the company, earnestly beseeching him to return. The appeal was not made in vain, and on November 26th of the same year the bills announced the revival of *La Partie de Chasse*, Collé's

popular comedy having been chosen for his reappearance by Prévile's express desire. His reception was a perfect triumph, and each of his subsequent performances in the principal characters of his *répertoire* was hailed with universal delight. During the stormy period of the Reign of Terror he lived in comparative retirement, but again rejoined his old companions in 1794, and for a few months devoted his gradually failing powers to the interest of the theatre. Early in the ensuing year, his memory, weakened by age and over-exertion, at length gave way, and he felt himself incapable of further effort. "I have played for the last time," he said, after once more undertaking his most popular personation, *Le Mercure Galant*, and he kept his word.

His wife, whose maiden name was Madeleine Angélique Drouin, and whom theatrical annals deservedly record as one of the best actresses of her day, died in 1798; and of the three children of their union, one daughter alone survived, married to M. Guesdon, Treasurer of the *Département de l'Oise*. In her residence at Beauvais, the retired comedian passed happily and peacefully the remaining years of his life, and finally breathed his last towards the beginning of 1800, at the ripe old age of seventy-nine. Shortly after his death, M. de Cambry, Prefect of the *Département*, caused a monument to be erected at Beauvais to his memory; and a piece, written by Messrs. Chazet and Dupaty, and entitled, *Le Buste de Prévile*, subsequently afforded the Parisians an opportunity of paying a farewell tribute of homage to their time-honoured favourite.

Among the numerous portraits existing of this celebrated actor may be mentioned one in the part of Crispin, painter and engraver unknown, underneath which is the following quatrain:

A voir Prévile et la manière aisée
Qui règne dans sa voix, son geste et son regard,
On dit; sous le manteau de l'art
C'est la nature déguisée.

He is also represented, together with his wife, in a scene from Destouches's *Tam-bour Nocturne*; the original painting on vellum by Fesch, now in the possession of an English collector, is a little artistic gem. The best, however, both as regards resemblance and execution, is the one drawn and engraved by Romanet; beneath it are inscribed Boileau's lines to Molière, for whose name that of the comedian has

been intentionally substituted. They are equally applicable to both :

Préville avec utilité
Dit plaisamment la vérité ;
Chacun profite à son école !
Tout en est beau, tout en est bon ;
Et sa plus burlesque parole
Est souvent un docte sermon.

ROUND THE WORLD.

WE are progressing. That, I suppose, is by this time a pretty-generally recognised fact. Personally, however, I don't know that it has ever been brought, as the saying is, much more home to me than it was this morning, when the postman brought me, in answer to enquiries respecting a certain advertisement which had caught my fancy, a polite invitation from Messrs. Grindlay and Co., to a little "yachting voyage round the world." It is something—not much—more than a quarter of a century since I last took that pleasant little journey. The Great Exhibition was still open when I sailed, the Great Duke just dead when I returned. Those five-and-twenty years have made a considerable difference in many things; but looking now at my old log of 1851-2, now at my just-received invitation for 1877-8, I am inclined to doubt if they have produced many stranger contrasts than that which has flavoured my coffee this morning.

A voyage round the world was a "big thing" in those days, and involved some preparation. I was a youngster then, just home from school, with my sleeves half-way to my elbows, and my inexpressibles half-way to my knees, and a considerable gap between the latter and the lower edge of my waistcoat; and the doctors, despairing of quinine and iron—"steel" we used to call it in those days—and sulphuric acid, and all the rest of it, had come to the conclusion that the only way of dealing with a young gentleman who, at sixteen years of age, persisted in standing six-feet-five in his stockings, was to pack him off on a voyage of, at least, proportionate length. It didn't take much knowledge of geography to point out that New Zealand was the only part of the world at all capable of fulfilling this condition; so to New Zealand it was promptly decided that I was to go. If I didn't grow an inch or two taller on the spot, it was simply because my frame had happily no potentiality of growth left in it.

And then, for some three months or so, my approaching voyage became the centre

round which our little household world revolved. Dear me! if one of Messrs. Grindlay's beautiful hot-pressed circulars had only come to hand then, how quickly the carriage would have been ordered round, and at what a pace my poor old dad would have driven up to town, to secure a berth on board the Sumatra. But little steam-yachts, of some two or three thousand tons, didn't go on pleasure-trips round the world in those days, and at least a month's anxious search was necessary before the parent birds could quite satisfy themselves as to the particular ark, in which they could trust their long-legged fledgeling to the flood. And when they had found her, she wasn't three thousand tons, by any means, but just eight hundred, and a big ship too, as ships went then. And when the ship was found, there was the outfit—and something like an outfit too—for the good ship Canterbury did not propose to spend a day at Bordeaux and another at Corunna, and two or three more at Lisbon, and so on, surveying the world, or the coast-line thereof, not only from China to Peru, but from Peru back again to China the other way. There was no prospect then of getting a clean shirt at Penang, or just stepping ashore for a paper-collar at Yokohama. Three months, at least, must be calculated upon—four months we managed to make it—between Gravesend and Port Cooper, and not a washerwoman or a tub of soapuds all the way. I believe, if the ship had not sailed till now, some fresh item of absolute necessity would still be turning up for that outfit every day.

And so at last we got to sea; and, as we stuck our nose out beyond the Foreland, the strong westerly breeze came dancing up to meet us, and the good ship, skittishly disposed, no doubt, after her long confinement in the dingy dock, was nothing loath to accept the invitation; and a shower of books and biscuit-tins, and other light articles from without, combined with equally unmistakable admonitions from within to warn me that neither the one class nor the other of my belongings were by any means so thoroughly "cleated down" as they ought to be. They settled down, however, before we got to New Zealand, the inner man especially recuperating in a surprising manner, and developing powers of assimilation, which, towards the end of the voyage, when the fresh provisions were all gone, and crew and passengers alike reduced to a some-

what limited menu of salt horse and pea-soup made with sea-water, became rather inconvenient. Taken altogether, indeed, a voyage round the world was not at that time seasoned as the Sumatra's is to be, by a "cuisine similar to that found at the best hotels." I hear great things of Australian preserved beef and mutton nowadays, and have received more than one invitation to civic and other feasts composed entirely of these succulent comestibles. But, in my time, the popular superstition was, that the masses of warm stringy substance, which even a sea-going stomach stoutly refused to assimilate, were manufactured chiefly at Coldbath-fields—of oakum not sufficiently well picked to serve any other purpose. On the whole, I think I have met with popular superstitions which had less apparent foundation.

Looking back through the old log, it is astounding and, perhaps, a trifle humiliating, to find how large a proportion of it is occupied with matters of this kind. To be sure, when you are four months at sea, without setting eyes upon so much as another ship for more than three of them, the ministry of the interior is apt to assume more importance than that of foreign affairs. It will be a different thing on board the Sumatra, no doubt, hardly ever out of sight of land, and with at least half-a-dozen days ashore in some new place of interest for every week afloat. But when breakfast and dinner are the sole events of the day, the most philosophic mind may be pardoned for taking some interest in the question of what they will consist. And, accordingly, I find my "principal events" run much as follows: "Such a day; lat. so and so; long. so much; killed our last sheep." "Such another day and so forth; killed our last pig." Or again: "Cow run dry, no more milk." Or yet again, and this evidently the most painful incident of all: "Capt. So-and-so just bought up the last half-dozen of brandy for his own drinking. Indignation meeting in the cuddy!" Think of that, ye sybarites, sipping your iced champagne in the luxurious saloon of the Sumatra!

Nor was it only on the outward voyage that these little contretemps would occur. Quite otherwise. We weren't half-way from New Zealand to Australia, when everything on board, except the salt-beef, gave out altogether; and the salt-beef was what the knowing hands in the fore-castle recognised as "fine old crusted Port Philip,

five years in cask." One of the men, a handy fellow, who had spent a good portion of his life on board a Greenland whaler, offered to carve snuffboxes out of it at a shilling apiece; but as there was never enough to go quite round the table, his genius languished for lack of material. And yet again, going up through the Pacific to San Francisco, with a highly "assorted" cargo of coals and time-expired convicts, we managed to go a little farther yet, and just succeeded in beating into Honolulu harbour, not only with hardly a pound of meat of any kind on board, but without a pint of water either.

And yet, what fun it all was! How we supplied the warmth which should have been drawn from the missing brandy, by stamping vigorously, hour after hour, up and down the deck just over the cabin of the enterprising passenger who had secured that last half-dozen! With what a splendid appetite did my friend E. and I sit down on the night of our arrival in Melbourne, to that quarter of a lamb, which we at once voted as not worth carving; and how heartily did we enjoy the astonished face of the waiter as, after a quarter of an hour or so of steady, almost silent, work, we looked up—E., from his polished shoulder-blade, and I, from my equally-denuded ribs—and demanded cold meat! What a triumph it was when—turned out of our hotel into the street, after spending our last sixpence in waiting week after week for the ship in which we had taken our passage to San Francisco—we drove the agent by a peremptory demand for the return of our passage-money into a solemn—say, affidavit—that she would be off the very next morning, and, taking him at his word, went on board that afternoon and lived there at free-quarters for a fortnight or more before she really sailed. How we enjoyed the row which arose when, by-and-by, we crossed the meridian, and the distinguished passengers in the steerage insisted, in the forcible dialect of their tribe, that the skipper's announcement—that the "Tuesday, May 8th," which had just passed, would be followed not by Wednesday, May 9th, as usual, but by another Tuesday, May 8th, again—was a swindle dictated by a paltry desire to economise his participle pork, and swore lustily that there never had been eight days in any week since they were foaled, and that, by so and so, and so and so, there shouldn't be now. And then when the crisis came,

and we in the cabin—there were only three of us—knew that the last bit of grub had been served out, and the last allowance of water drunk, and that unless we could manage to beat our way into Honolulu before night fell, the hundred and fifty or so old convicts in the steerage must know it too. Phew! That was running it rather fine; but there was an excitement about it after all.

Excitement too there was, and plenty of it, in the three days lying-to under a scrap of tarpaulin seized in the mizen rigging, and with the huge seas tumbling in on the decks of the ill-found, over-loaded little barque, which reeled and staggered under them as though every plunge would be her last. Excitement in that somewhat vaguely directed for-night's run, with the only officer of the ship available for duty, quite content happy-go-lucky Yankee that he was, to take his "lats. and longs." from my amateur observations, which indeed—to judge from the perfect gravity with which he on one occasion accepted my experimental assertion, that I had "got on" my sextant a hundred and three degrees—were, perhaps, after all, of at least equal value with his own. Excitement when our little "wheelbarrow" steamer stuck fast on a snag as we shot the Castillo rapids, on our way across the Isthmus, and seemed more than likely to stay there, till the packet on the other side had sailed, and left us stranded among the mosquitoes and alligators of that pleasant stream for another month at least. Finally, very decided excitement in the ever-recurring question, would the fast lightening purse hold out until we got fairly home; in the desperate struggle to make the two ends of our voyage meet somehow at last; in that ultimate triumphal landing at Liverpool in the ragged coat and continuations which alone represented the gorgeous outfit of fifteen months back, a clean shirt borrowed from a returning gold-digger on board, and just enough money in one's pocket to pay one's second-class fare to town with a fourpenny piece over for refreshment on the way!

That was the way we travelled round the world in those days, and, as I have said, there was fun in it too. "Forsan et hæc olim" E. and I used sententiously to quote for each other's comfort, when an unusually heavy sea had knocked us gasping into the lee-scuppers, or when that internal vacuum which nature—human nature at all events—abhorreth so far beyond all others, was

setting up a more than commonly clamorous and ineffectual demand. And now that the olim has come, these little contretemps certainly are not unpleasant to look back upon. On the whole, however, if I do make up my mind to go "round the world" again, I am inclined to think that Messrs. Grindlay's floating hotel will be an improvement in the way of doing it.

THE STORY OF A BANK-NOTE.

THE pedigree of a Bank of England note is to be traced as distinctly as that of all celebrated horses, and some celebrated men. Fibre won, after much soaking, bleaching, and other rough treatment, from the flax-plant, is woven in due course into linen cloth; and it is from the fragments of this fabric that the celebrated Bank of England note-paper is manufactured. To say that it is made from rags conveys hardly a just idea to the mind. Rags suggest the basket of the chiffonnier, the dust-heap, the gutter, and tell stories strange enough to those who have keen ears; stories of wealth and luxury, of sordid garrets, of purblind needlewomen, of gay parade, of wedding-bells, of poverty, of tears, and of death. But the romance of the rag-bag is foreign to that eminently respectable "institution" the bank-note. It is not made of rags which have seen better days, but of clean, fresh cuttings—innocent of human contact and devoid of human interest—not portions of actual garments, but the snippings, square, oblong, or triangular, which, when the utmost skill of the cutter of clothes or of shoes has been applied to his work, remain over and above the adaptable material: the winnowings, as it were, of fine linen and coarser duck, not without some admixture of cotton. These cuttings are not all of English growth, many being imported from the Continent, whence they arrive packed in huge sacks, and find their way down to a sweet little Hampshire village between ancient Basing and busy Andover, surrounded by smiling farms, and watered by one of those clear and fresh rivulets of "troutful" water, accounted among the "chief commodities" of Hampshire. Here is made, and has been made since its first adoption by the Bank of England, that beautifully crisp, thin, tough, elaborately-watermarked, and musically-rustling paper, on which are printed those promises to pay

"on demand," which are received with implicit faith in almost every corner of the civilised world.

All the paper made in England previous to the revocation of the Edict of Nantes was of the "whity-brown sort—coarse and inelegant." Such as it was, it had been made at Dartford since the day of that astute German, Sir John Spielman, jeweller to Queen Elizabeth, who built a mill on the precise spot now occupied by Messrs. Pigou and Wilks's powder manufactory, and, moreover, obtained from her Majesty one of the monopolies she was so fond of granting—to wit, a license "for the sole gathering, for ten years, of all rags, &c., necessary for the making of such paper." Paper-making and lime-trees are said to have been introduced to this country by Sir John; but, although the trees flourished, the paper was poor stuff until reformed by the exiled paper-makers of the Angoumois. Up to the date of the Dragonnades all the best sorts of paper were imported from abroad, mostly from France; but shortly afterwards the import of paper ceased, the refugees being able to supply as good an article as could be produced elsewhere. According to Mr. Smiles, the first manufactory for fine paper was established in London in 1685; but other mills were shortly after started in Kent—at Maidstone and along the Darent—as well as in other parts of England. That the leading workmen employed in the first fine paper-mills were French and Flemish is shown by the terms still in use in the trade. Thus, in Kent, the man who lays the sheets on the felts is the "coucher;" the fateman or vat-man is the Flemish "fassman," and the room wherein certain operations are performed is still called the "salle."

Among the refugee paper manufacturers was Henri de Portal, of an ancient and noble family in the south of France, of Albigenese descent. For many centuries Toulouse was the home of the Portals, several of whom were in succession elected "capitoul," a position of great dignity and power in that city. When the persecution of the Albigeneses set in, the Portals took up arms for their faith, but were scattered by the Crusaders under De Montfort and Dominic. They fled from Toulouse in different directions; some to Nismes, others into the Gironde. Their heresy appears to have been a family tradition; for several of them perished in the massacres, which occurred throughout France

subsequently to the Eve of St. Bartholomew. Under the Edict of Nantes they enjoyed but scant measure of justice, and even that was withdrawn, at last, altogether by Louis the Fourteenth. At the commencement of the Dragonnades Louis de Portal was residing at his Château de la Portalerie, seven leagues from Bordeaux. Endeavouring to escape from the brutal soldiery which had been let loose on the defenceless inhabitants, he set out with his wife and five children, to take refuge on his estate in the Cevennes. The dragoons pursued the family to their retreat, overtook them, cut down the father and mother and one of the children, and burnt to the ground the house in which they had taken refuge. The remaining four children had concealed themselves in an oven outside the building, and escaped, to wander, helpless and footsore, back to Bordeaux, in the hope of escaping from France by sea. They were fortunate enough to secure a passage by a merchant vessel, on board of which they were shipped, concealed in barrels. They were among the last of the refugees who escaped previous to the issue of the infamous order to fumigate all departing vessels, so as to stifle any Protestant fugitives who might be concealed among the cargo. The young Portals reached Holland in safety, where they found friends and foster-parents. Miss Portal became governess in the family of the Countess Finkensteen, and afterwards married M. Lenormant, a refugee settled at Amsterdam; while Henry and William followed the fortunes of the Prince of Orange, accompanied him to England, and established their family on the spot occupied by them ever since.

William subsequently went into the church. Henry, the elder brother, was a proficient in the art of paper-making, and started a mill of his own at Laverstoke, on the River Test, near Whitechurch, in Hampshire—a stream of delicious purity, rising in the range of chalk hills half-a-dozen miles away. Gathering round him the best French and Dutch workmen, he soon achieved high reputation as a paper manufacturer; producing such excellent work, that the Bank of England gave him the privilege of supplying the paper for bank-notes, ever since continued to his descendants, and now enjoyed by Mr. Wyndham S. Portal, whose dwelling-house is historic Malshanger—the house of the Warhams.

Concerning the pellucid Test, bluff

William Cobbett moralises in his quaintest strain. The Test is the "foundation of England's fictitious prosperity," a rivulet, apparently pure, but really Phlegethontic. "There runs that stream which turns the mill of Squire Portal, and which mill makes the Bank of England note-paper! Talk of the Thames and the Hudson, with their forests of masts; talk of the Nile and the Delaware, bearing the food of millions on their bosoms; talk of the Ganges and the Mississippi, sending forth over the world their silks and their cottons; talk of the Rio de La Plata and other rivers, their beds pebbled with gold, and silver, and diamonds. What, as to their effect upon the condition of mankind, as to the virtues, the vices, the enjoyments, and the sufferings of men—what are all these rivers put together, compared with the river of Whitechurch, which a man of threescore may jump across dry shod, and, to look at, is of far less importance than any gutter in the Wen! Yet this same river, by merely turning a wheel, which wheel sets some rag-tearers, and grinders, and washers, and re-compressers in motion, has produced a greater effect on the condition of man, than has been produced on that condition by all the other rivers, all the seas, all the mines, and all the continents in the world." Thus the fervent hater of "rag-money," infuriated at the lessening numbers of his favourite yeomanry, and the tendency of society (by no means weakened since his day) to split into two great divisions—rich and poor. Cobbett was for ever testifying against rag-money, and ascribed to the bank-note nearly all the poverty which existed in his time. The troutful Test, which had the effect of raising the tribune's ire, still supplies the motive power to Laverstoke Mills, through a turbine of very perfect and beautiful construction. As we ring the factory-bell a door suddenly opens, and we are confronted by a magnificent specimen of the English policeman. At first it is not easy to see what a policeman should want in a paper-mill, but the place we have entered is no common paper-mill. There are legends current in the country-side, that the workpeople who once enter its precincts, like those of the old porcelain manufactory at Meissen, never leave it again alive; the proof of the contrary, if it were wanted, being supplied by the prettiest row of workmen's cottages in England, with library and cricket-ground attached. The authority of the present policeman was formerly

exercised by a Bank clerk who dwelt at Laverstoke, and was, by a pleasant fiction, supposed to keep an eye on Mr. Portal and his establishment; that useful organ being more often employed either in watching a trout-fly, or in taking aim at a rabbit. The majesty of the law is now supposed to be safe in the hands of a single police-officer, and the potentiality expressed by a row of special constables' staves.

Following a cargo of rags across the courtyard, we see the great sacks hoisted into a room where some score or more of women are occupied in picking, sorting, and shredding. Each worker sits before a table, in which is fixed an upright blade, like the oyster-opener of New York. Swiftly she shakes the cuttings apart, picks out every vestige of coloured stuff, and casts it aside, as perfect whiteness and purity are absolute conditions of the dainty goods made at Laverstoke. She also, by the help of the fixed upright blade, cuts and tears the larger pieces down to a convenient size. This picked stuff is again overlooked, and the linen carefully sorted from the cotton, so far as the ingenuity of textile manufacturers will permit. Finally passed as eligible material by the forewoman, the rags are piled in enormous bins, and carefully covered over to exclude dust. They are next subjected to a tremendous soaking and washing, the water for which is not drawn from the Test—even that beautiful rivulet not being considered clear enough for this purpose—but from a magnificent well plunging deep down into the chalk. When thoroughly washed, the material is passed on to the pulping mill, wherein it is ground very small indeed. Some four or five hours' pulping reduce the mass to the consistency of porridge, and in a couple more it becomes creamy-looking, and the fibre is considered to be sufficiently disintegrated. A spoonful of this pulp, if thrown into a glass of water, and shaken up, separates immediately into particles of exceeding minuteness, giving the water a delicately clouded, almost opaline, appearance when held up to the light. Having been tested in this way, the pulp finds its way into a strainer of exquisite fineness, where it is met by a stream of water, which dilutes it to the proper consistency—that of weak milk-and-water. Running through the strainer, the fluid reaches a tank, on either side of which stands a workman. One of these, the dipper, is armed with a frame, concerning which a few words of explanation are necessary.

On this frame no little care and ingenuity have been expended. Its size is not very great, being only that of eight bank-notes, or four sheets of paper—each sheet making two notes. Acute observers will recollect that a genuine note has always three ragged or “deckel” edges—so called from the rim of the frame—and one cut edge; as a “right-hand” five-pound note has a blunt corner, and tens, fifties, hundreds, and thousands, variously placed indentations in the “right-hand” deckel edge. In mentioning these latter peculiarities, we must—lest we cause a panic—insist particularly that they are only observable on “right-hand” notes; but that the three rough edges and one cut edge are on every genuine Bank of England note. Years ago the moulds on which the water-mark, or rather wire-mark, depends, were made of fine copper wire and wire gauze, stitched together at great expenditure of time. Since the introduction of the larger Britannia in the corner, a more workman-like method has been introduced for ensuring perfect uniformity. A thin sheet of copper is forced into a die, and is then shaved or rasped down till, the lines in relief being cut away, the remainder presents the appearance of a wire model of the familiar water-mark. By this method, the water-mark of one note is not only like, but the exact counterpart of another, and the manufacture of precisely similar notes goes on for ever. That great effects can be produced by a combination of die-sinking, copper sheeting, and wire gauze, is proved by the superb collection of water-mark papers exhibited by Mr. Portal on various occasions, and notably at Vienna in 1872. One of these is of very large size, with Britannia in the centre, surrounded by elaborate designs of grapes and vine-leaves, oak and acorn. Not so perfect, but more interesting, perhaps, are the many specimens of strange water-marks—some with colours interwoven in their fabric—devised from time to time to defeat the persistent forgers of the “one-pound note,” so much easier to “utter” among persons of small means and imperfect education, than the “fiver” which finds its way into the hands of persons of greater wealth, and presumably of more highly-trained intelligence. The experience of a score of years proved that bank-notes of low value will be forged in spite of the gallows, and the issue of these was abandoned in consequence.

When the work of the mould-maker is

finished, the double moulds are fixed in the frame, which we left in the hands of the workman standing by his tank of sky-blue mixture. Holding the frame horizontally, he plunges it into the tank, and, after giving it a shake or two, lets it rest for a few seconds to drain off the water on one edge of the tank, slightly raised for that purpose. This rest is a tell-tale. Yielding to the slightest touch, it communicates with a dial which records every dip as creating eight notes, or rather, four sheets of double note-paper—the count being kept at Laverstoke in sheets. When five hundred—or one ream—is recorded on the dial, the bell rings, and work ceases at the tank for a minute or two. The second workman, who receives the frame from the dipper, has all this time been occupied in performing an operation requiring apparently some considerable dexterity. Seizing the frame with both hands he turns it over deftly on to a piece of fine felting, and, by a sudden movement, detaches it from the frame, and “couches” it on its woollen bed. As the bell rings, announcing the completion of a ream—his work is represented by a pile of felting, between the folds of which lie concealed the thin films of the future notes, in which the water-mark is distinctly perceptible. This pile is now subjected to a pressure of a hundred tons. After this ordeal, the notes are almost dry, and singularly strong, but are further dried by being passed between rollers. They are yet only in their blotting-paper stage of existence, but are already articles of value, and carefully counted by hand and machine. At every stage of growth, the bank-note is carefully counted, checked, and entered, the book-keeping involved in its production being enormous. Each ream is also weighed at the completion of its blotting-paper period, and the workmen—who are paid on a combined system of time, piece, and premiums—receive a premium for every ream which approaches within certain limits the standard of perfection. This is about thirty-five grains for ordinary, and thirty-eight for Indian notes, made thicker to stand the wear and tear of a hot climate. Every ream is ticketed and docketed, with the name of the workman, the date of production, the letter of the vat, and so forth, and these, with its weight, are entered in a book. Then it is counted by hand, and put to rest in an iron-bound chamber. On its release it is examined; sheet by sheet being keenly scrutinised by quick

female eyes, to detect any holes, weak spots, and thick places, or any excess of weight. Every note judged defective is put aside as a "spoils," and must be properly accounted for. These spoils give a great deal of trouble, as it would be a premium on forgery to allow rejected notes to leave the mills. They are therefore made up into parcels, perforated by a machine, kept careful count of, and finally reduced to pulp again. In olden times they were burned—a solemn *auto-da-fé* being held now and then in the presence of the Bank Argus previously referred to—but of late years this wasteful process has been superseded by that of resolving the imperfect notes into their original fibre. After due examination, the notes are again made up into reams, the edges are rubbed down, and they are ready for a bath of size. Like all raw material used at Laverstoke, the size is as good as can be made. The notes, between layers of flannel, are passed through a tank full of size at a temperature of a hundred and twenty degrees, and, after being pressed between rollers, are again dried between blankets. There is now more counting by hand and machine, and a final examination. All spoils having thus at last been got rid of, the sheets are laid between leaves of metal, and passed under rollers—in fact, calendered. Perfect at last, they are made up into oblong packages, stored, booked, and finally sent to Threadneedle-street in great heavily-padded boxes, under the charge of the proper officer. Our double bank-note sheet is now complete in all things save printing. In the water-mark are the well-known words, and in addition, the mysterious letters and numerals which record the vat from which the sheet was made, and the date of its production. All the beautiful processes we have barely space to indicate are conducted with singular swiftness, and yet with careful haste, for although the life of every note is watched and recorded from its very birth in the dipper's frame, the Bank of England requires Mr. Portal to produce twenty millions of notes per annum.

Duly water-marked, dried, and packed in reams of five hundred sheets, equivalent to a thousand notes, the paper arrives at the Bank in cases, and is immediately handed over to the Store Department, entered in books kept for the purpose, and stowed away in presses securely locked. Before being served out to the printer every ream is counted—actually counted by human hand and eye. Placing the

ream before him, the counter "fans," in the language of stationers—that is, turns up one angle of the little pile of paper sheets before him so as to throw the corners out into a fan-like form. Long practice enables a skilled counter to tell off as many as four reams per hour, and it is curious to mark how well and how happy these counters appear. To persons who cannot make a dozen fair copies of any given document without making a blunder, this work seems soul-crushing. To sit the live-long day, and tell over and over again reams of embryo bank-notes—money for other people—should be work reducing the operator to melancholy madness, but there is no gleam of insanity in the quick eyes of the tellers. When the tale is found good the reams are handed over to the printer, Mr. Coe, who is bound to return a similar number to his taskmasters. Bank-note paper requires no preliminary damping, but receives the impress which gives it value in a state of perfect dryness. In olden times notes were really genuine copperplate engravings, as can be seen from the curious specimens hanging in Mr. Coe's office. Here we have the primeval bank-note of 1699—its slender framework of print filled in with manuscript—and the now extinct notes for thirty and forty, for two pounds and for one. The latter is an elegant specimen of engraving, but never took hold of popular feeling, as the song, "I'd rather have a guinea than a one-pound note," testifies. In the far North, where money is not, or rather was not, plentiful, local one-pound notes endure till this day; but the southron "pockpudding"—whatever that word of offence may precisely connote—has ever been averse to notes of low value. The Scot, however, seems to carry the world with him, for we have in our travels to and fro encountered many odd specimens of "rag-money"—Austrian notes of the olden times, cut up into fragments to represent fractional currency, and American "shin plasters," postal currency, and wild-cat bills galore. Small monetary deer of this kind encourage the forger, for we recollect that, during our residence in America, the fifty-cent "stamps" were under so much suspicion, that desperation begot confidence and they were "taken freely," good and bad, on the principle that life is not long enough to criticise the merits of half-a-dollar. The English mind has ever abhorred these vanities of paper currency, preferring to repose on a background of solid bullion.

It is now several years since Bank of England notes ceased to be copperplate engravings, strictly so called. They are now produced by surface printing, as it is called; that is to say, from a metal block raised like the box one used in engraving. An ordinary English note requires two impressions, an Indian note three, on account of the green colour introduced into the latter. At the first impression the framework without the date or number is printed, at the second the date, number, and signature are put in. Now, as notes are printed in series of a hundred thousand—save one—a simple but ingenious device, fixed in the plate, revolves as each note is printed off, from the initial ace to ninety-nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine. For this reason, and also to increase the difficulty of forgery, five figures are always employed; as, for instance, number one of a series is represented thus, 00001. It may also be added that for convenience the hundred thousandth note is printed by machinery in every respect except the number, which is put in by hand. This note is retained, and is never issued by the Bank. All the printing operations are accompanied by elaborate checks and tallies like those at Laverstoke.

So exactly does all the mechanism work, that in the case of "spoils" a rigid account must be kept, and the few sheets, now and then awkwardly printed, delivered up with the perfect specimens. The printing of a bank-note is prepared for with great care, the "make-ready" for ensuring a perfect impression as to strength and light and shade being particularly elaborate.

The account kept by Mr. Coe is not less remarkable. The days in the Calendar are divided into five-pound days, ten-pound days, and so forth, and this arrangement is so strictly observed that not the slightest difficulty is felt in tracing the individual note to its series. It is, so to speak, pigeon-holed from the very outset and under strict surveillance during the whole of its natural life. Forgery is thus met by the difficulty that there can never be more than one note of a certain value, date, or number, and that when this one has returned, as the vast majority of notes do return, swiftly to its home, any others of like value, date, and number which may be presented must of a necessity be forgeries. Yet in order to make a possible note, that is to say, of the right date for its value, this is exactly what the forger is compelled

to do: to produce duplicates of a note already in existence with the absolute certainty that the fraud will be discovered at head-quarters. It may be answered that this is of comparatively little consequence to the forger, who would pass his notes at other places than Threadneedle-street, and become a singularly remote entity at the moment his fraud was detected. This is true enough, but as practice has shown, the difficulty of imitating the water-mark and engraving, and the certainty of detection supplied by the method of printing in series, effectually bar any attempt at fraud on a large scale, such as that perpetrated by the ingenious Mathison, who, about a hundred years ago, was in the habit of taking his own forgeries to the Bank itself, changing them for good notes and carrying off the latter for imitation. He was, it is true, a great man, and would have died in wealth and honour, had he not allowed pride to get the better of discretion and committed himself to an authoritative opinion as to the genuineness of a note in the very Bank itself, thus attracting suspicion and twisting a rope for his own neck. It is said that he offered to give up his secret of imitating the water-mark if his life were spared, but the authorities declined the bargain, thinking probably that his secret would be safer with him in the world beyond Tyburn.

Printing over, the notes, now complete and negotiable, are handed over to the order of the Treasury Department of the Bank of England, and are then stowed in the room in which so many people have experienced a curious joy at being allowed to hold in their hand a million sterling, i.e., two small packages, representing together a ream of Laverstoke paper, inscribed with a thousand promises to "pay on demand" the sum of one thousand pounds.

It is not our purpose to follow the course of a bank-note when it is turned loose upon the world to shift for itself. Often its life is short but eminently respectable, being passed entirely in the strong boxes of bankers until paid in to the Bank itself, whence it is rarely re-issued. In a few cases it gets into strange company; passes through greasy pockets and dirty hands; goes down to race-courses, and becomes familiar with Tattersall's on Monday afternoons. But sooner or later it comes back, either crisp and smiling, murmuring softly with its pleasant voice, or limp and torn, hacked limb from limb and patched together again—sorely befouled

and bedraggled—a very tatterdemalion to look upon; but not a penniless prodigal, for the “promise to pay on demand,” barely legible upon its grimy face, will be kept most assuredly. Then the work of the bank-note is over, and it is gathered to its fellows, to enjoy a dignified retirement in a species of asylum for six years, at the expiration of which period its life is brought to a fiery end in the Moloch chamber of the Bank of England.

WHAT HE COST HER.

BY JAMES PAYN,

AUTHOR OF “LOST SIR MASSINGHERD,” “AT HER MERCY,”
“HALVES,” &c.

CHAPTER XLIV. THE BRIDEGROOM.

“WELL, Hugh, and what did you think of the bride?” enquired Mrs. Darall, as, steadied by her son’s strong arm, she clattered on her pattens home from church.

“I scarcely looked her way,” returned the young man, in grave preoccupied tones.

“Well, of course, not during the service, but did you not notice afterwards how everybody was pressing about the porch to speak to her? She is perfectly lovely, and looks so simple and innocent. She is a blonde, however, which it seems is not your taste. Bless me, what a difference it makes to a young man when he has once made his choice; he has no eyes for anybody else, has he?”

“At all events he ought not to have, mother!”

“Well, of course not; though I shouldn’t have seen any harm in your admiring Mrs. Landon. Her husband is a fine handsome young gentleman, only very pale, and, as it seemed to me, not so happy-looking as a bridegroom should be.”

“I see I must be careful to look my best, mother, when I get married, since you are inclined to be so critical.”

It was very difficult for Hugh to carry on this conversation, slight as it was, or even to catch the meaning of what his mother said. His thoughts were monopolised by the monstrous fact that he had just seen Cecil Landon—the husband of his Gracie’s friend, with another woman by his side—his bride. There was no possible escape from this terrible complication. This, then, was the explanation of Cecil’s continuous absence from his wife and home; he had committed bigamy!

Such was the simple fashion in which Hugh’s thoughts arranged themselves; but the indignation of his soul was none the less that he indulged himself in no mental

objurgations. Darall’s character was eminently just, and at that moment he thought less of his friend and of his crime, than of the consequences which it must needs entail upon the innocent. He would have stuck to his friend in trouble “closer than a brother;” nay, he would stick to him, perhaps, under punishment for his crime; but now, while his friend was, as it were, triumphing in his villany, his sympathy was given wholly to those whom he had wronged. He had wronged Ella, shamefully, cruelly, for one; but he had wronged the second girl infinitely worse. Darall had noticed Rose—though, as he had said, he had scarcely looked her way, his attention being so taken up with Cecil—and agreed with his mother that she was pretty, simple, and innocent; but to do him justice, he needed not her good looks to recommend her to his pity. His heart bled for her, while it flamed with indignation against Cecil. The man who had been his friend was, he acknowledged to himself, a villain and a traitor. For the present it did not even seem to him that there was any mitigation of his offence in the fact that he was also, in some sort, a madman. For who but a madman could suppose that a crime of his sort could escape discovery? It had been found out to-day, as it happened, by him, Hugh Darall; but, if not, it would have been found out to-morrow by somebody else. And now it was found out, what duty devolved upon him, the discoverer?

Some philosophers aver that we are all conscious of what is the right thing to be done in any case, whatever may be the urgency of our reasons for not doing it; but in this case Darall really did not know what to do, and far less, as the phrase goes, what to do “for the best,” since action in any direction must needs end in ruin. Moreover, to remain passive was only to defer the catastrophe. And what would be thought of him when it did occur, and it should turn out that he was aware of Cecil’s crime, but “had not thought it worth while”—as was observed by an important witness in a certain famous murder case—“to mention it?” Unfortunately, Hugh had little or no sense of humour, so that the comicality of this quandary did not at all mitigate the horror of it.

Of one thing, amid all his shifting thoughts and fears, he felt assured—namely, that Landon would seek the very first opportunity of speaking with him in private, and endeavouring to keep his mouth shut. Promptness of that kind was

natural to the man; and as Darall remembered that, and how deception had once been as alien to him as suspense was hateful, he could not but reflect upon the incongruity of Landon's crime with the man's character. He must have been drunk with misplaced love, indeed, to have risked so much—and, above all, so long—for its gratification. Hugh, however, was not one of those maudlin sentimentalists who consider that drunkenness excuses crime.

He said to himself, "This man is a villain, and I shall tell him so."

He had not long to wait for the opportunity. After their early dinner, to which, to his mother's great trouble, he could do but little justice, Hugh endeavoured to calm the fever of his mind by tobacco. He might as well have tried to stop a cannon-ball with his hat; but the occupation gave him some excuse for silence, and, while his mother talked, he glanced occasionally in the direction of the cottage-gate. Before he had replenished his pipe a second time, he saw Cecil pass by—alone.

"Why, surely that was Mr. Landon!" exclaimed the old lady.

"Very likely," replied her son, with an indifferent air. "He is probably taking a constitutional, and, if you will excuse me, I think I shall do the same."

"But you will be back in time for after-noon church, Hugh?"

"Perhaps, mother; I am not sure."

There was a gravity in the young man's tone that forbade discussion upon that topic. He did not attach that supreme importance to going twice to church upon a Sunday, that it had in his mother's eyes; but then, on the other hand, thought she, he was so good that he didn't require it so much as other people.

When Darall got into the road he saw Landon dawdling up the hill, and felt that it was his intention to be overtaken, albeit he did not know that the other had passed the cottage twice, before he had caught sight of him. When Hugh came quite close, Cecil turned round with an "Hullo, old fellow!" and held his hand out. But Darall kept his hands in his pockets.

"Who on earth would have thought of seeing you here?" continued Cecil, with affected gaiety. The perturbation of his mind could hardly have shown itself more distinctly than by such an ill-judged speech.

"Nay," returned Darall, quickly, "who would have thought of seeing *you*? May I ask if that young lady, by whose side you stood in church this morning, is aware that you are a married man?"

"My dear Darall," stammered the other, "I am aware that in your eyes I must appear in a most anomalous position——"

"I don't know about anomalous," interrupted Hugh, scornfully; "you appear to me to be a most infernal scoundrel."

For an instant it seemed as though Landon would have made short work of what life was left to their friendship by a blow, but he restrained himself.

"You should not use such words as those to me, Darall, without grave reason—without being sure, I mean, that I have deserved them."

"Since you have persuaded Miss Mytton to marry you, you must deserve them. You have acted a base and cowardly lie, and you deserve all you will get for it."

"And what is that?"

"Penal servitude."

Cecil, who was ghastly pale before, turned to a leaden hue, and laughed a laugh that was worse to listen to than his face was to look at.

"You think I have committed bigamy, I suppose?" he said.

Then it struck Darall that, perhaps, Landon was not really married to Rose; that she understood his real position (for he had read of such infatuation in women), and was content to deceive her friends. His mother, it is true, had led him to believe that Rose had been married at Grantham, in which case there could have been no deception; but in this, as it had been hearsay, she might have been mistaken.

"It is possible," said Darall, coldly, "that you may have so arranged matters as to save your own skin; but whether you have sacrificed this girl to your pleasure, or allowed her to sacrifice herself, your position is the same in the eyes of every honest man—and it is infamous."

"It appears to me, Darall, that you have lost your old love of justice, thus to condemn a man—and your old friend too—unheard."

"I am ready to hear what you have to say for yourself," replied Hugh, in icy tones.

"Listen, then: you know, I daresay, that I have been living for some time apart from—from Ella."

"I know that you have quarrelled with your wife."

"Ah, there is your mistake. I quarrelled with her because she was not my wife."

"What?"

"There, you see, you have taken too much for granted. I was never married to Ella, though I thought I was. She

deceived me at the altar by using a feigned name, which invalidated the ceremony."

"And does she know that?"

Landon hung his head, and poked the ground with the end of his walking-stick. "No; it is true that I have been wrong there. I had not the moral courage to tell her. I confess that I have been a coward."

"You are paying yourself a compliment in saying so," answered Darall; the memory of poor Ella's recent kindness, and of the love that Gracie had told him her friend still entertained for this lost wretch, kindling his heart with rage. "I dare say you have also hidden from your second wife the story of your first."

"I have," said Cecil, in despairing tones. "Call me any name you please."

Here Landon, although unconsciously, was playing his best cards. Darall was touched, in spite of himself, by the humiliation and wretchedness of the man that had been once his friend.

"And what is it you mean to do," enquired he in softened tones, "as respects Ella?"

"Heaven knows—if heaven has anything to do with such a man as I," replied Landon, bitterly. "I will do anything—everything—that is possible. Reparation is out of my power. I cannot remarry Ella; I cannot unmarry Rose. What a villain you must think me!"

"It is impossible to think otherwise, Landon."

"Still, if you had known my position, Darall; how hateful my first union had become to me, and how deep and genuine was my love for Rose——"

"That is all lies and wicked rubbish," broke in Hugh, impatiently. "You have nothing to say for yourself except, 'I am a scoundrel.'"

"And has my old friend nothing else to say for me? Oh, Darall, for the sake of the old times, have mercy on me."

"It is not of me you should ask mercy. What is it you would have me do?"

"Nothing—that is all I ask of you. Do not expose me. Give me yet a little time, and I will confess my sin—my crime, if you will—to both these women. You have not told your mother that it was I you saw in church this morning?"

"No; I have become for your sake a liar like yourself. I will give you twelve hours to make your peace—if it be possible—with those whom you have wronged."

"Give me twenty-four, Hugh. Tomorrow we have promised to join the

vicar on some excursion. I cannot tell Rose till we return. Give me twenty-four hours."

"I will do that; and, in the meantime, let me see no more of you."

Darall turned upon his heel and began to retrace his steps; the church-bell was giving its last call to afternoon service, and he knew that he should have an hour or so to think over this wretched matter at home—alone. As he expected, his mother had gone to church, but no sooner had he lit his pipe in the dining-room, than there came a knock at the front door.

"Missus is out," he heard the servant-girl reply to the visitor; but the next moment she entered the room with a young lady at her heels.

It was Helen Mytton.

"My mother is at church," he began confusedly.

"I know it, Mr. Darall," was the calm reply. "I am come to have a few words with you alone. Do not put out your pipe, I am used to tobacco; and I am here, as you may judge, upon no visit of ceremony."

He bowed, and handed her a chair. He knew what she had come about at once, and his heart died within him.

"You have just parted from my brother-in-law, I believe," said she very quietly, but with evident effort.

"Yes, I have been talking with him for a few minutes on the road."

"You find that he is no stranger, but your old friend, Cecil Landon?"

"Yes."

There was a moment's pause; she had expected that reply, of course, but it moved her nevertheless. He had put down his pipe at once, notwithstanding her protest, but she seemed to suffer from want of air, and he threw back the window.

"Forgive me, if I seem weak and foolish," said she gently. "My whole happiness—my life itself—is bound up with that of my sister; and she must be my excuse for all. What I am come to ask for is the truth—however terrible it may be. You will not deceive me, Mr. Darall?"

"I will not," said he, nor did he intend to do so. His promise to Cecil had reference only to any voluntary statement upon his part. He would be no party to further fraud. And as for exposure, his refusal to answer Helen's questions would be equivalent to full confession. Nevertheless, he did add, "At the same time, Miss Mytton, I must needs say that, for this day and to-morrow at least, I have passed my word

to say nothing that I can avoid saying to your brother-in-law's prejudice."

"That one word, 'brother-in-law,' Mr. Darall, keeps alive the only hope I have still left. If you can confirm it, I shall owe you an endless debt of gratitude. Is Henry Landon, in law as well as in the sight of God, my sister's husband?"

"I do believe, madam, upon my honour, that he is."

"And yet, but the day before yesterday, I heard you speak of Cecil Landon—that is of this same man—as being a married man!"

"I did speak of him as such, because I believed him to be so. I knew the lady; as pure and good a woman"—for Helen's lip had curled—"let me add, in justice to her, as your sister herself. But Landon now tells me that there was some informality in his first marriage, which renders it null and void; and that in the eye of the law he was a bachelor."

"But so false a wretch will say anything."

"I am not defending Cecil Landon, Miss Mytton; he has, in my opinion, no defence; but I feel sure he was not lying to me in this instance. When he married your sister he was, in the law's sight, free to marry her."

"Thank heaven for that," murmured Helen. "He has disgraced himself alone; not her—you sigh, Mr. Darall. Is there more bad news to come?"

"No, madam; no more—or at least no worse—as respects your sister."

He was thinking of Ella, upon whom disgrace and ruin would fall for certain. Helen's self-congratulation, natural though it was, offended him.

"You have taken a heavy load off my heart, Mr. Darall, although much remains. Is it too much to ask of you—a stranger, and also this man's friend—to advise me in this matter? I feel unequal to the burthen of this frightful secret; yet to tell it, prematurely, may be to make matters even worse. Perhaps after to-morrow—you said 'after to-morrow' you would be free to speak—I might take counsel with you? I have no right, of course, to ask it; but you seem kind and true, and I have no helper."

"I feel for you, and pity your sad strait, Miss Mytton," returned Darall, gravely. "If help of mine can avail you or yours, you shall have it; but I warn you that in the evil days which must needs be close at hand, I shall have other interests to defend than those of your unhappy sister."

"Is it possible, then, that this man—in

calling whom your friend, a few moments back, I felt that I had done you wrong—still possesses your sympathies, Mr. Darall? and that in case his interests, forsooth, should seem antagonistic to those of his injured wife, that you will act to her disadvantage?"

"I did not say that, madam, nor did I mean to imply so much, though the friendship that has withered away retains some dearthness still. I was not alluding to your brother-in-law; but to another whose position is even more pitiable than that of your sister."

"You are speaking of the woman who—"

"I am speaking of the lady, madam," put in Hugh quietly, "who, at this moment, believes herself to be Cecil Landon's wife as firmly as does your sister, and whom someone will have to undeceive. Rather than undertake that task, I, for one, would have this hand cut off. Forgive me, Miss Mytton, if I appear to you a partisan. I have no part or lot in the matter, nor may I be called upon to so much as say one word in it; but if it must be said, rest assured it shall not be to your sister's detriment."

"I thank you with all my heart," said Helen, rising from her chair. "You are just, it seems, as well as kind; and since my sister's cause is that of justice, you will be its champion."

He shook his head.

"Well, at all events, you have been a friend to me, and I am deeply your debtor."

He answered only with a grave, sad smile, and they shook hands in silence.

"If my sister had chosen a man like this," thought Helen, with a bitter sigh, "her happiness would have been in safe keeping."

CHAPTER XLV. THE MEETING IN THE LOCK.

THE circumstance which interfered, and, as Landon weakly imagined, fortunately interfered, with the immediate confession of his position, was a certain water excursion organised by the vicar, in the special honour of the newly-married couple, and to which Rose was looking forward with childish expectation. It was to take place on the Thames, a river with whose beauties she was wholly unacquainted, and involved a journey by railway of considerable length. To Helen, the notion of taking part in any amusement under such circumstances was simply ghastly and repulsive; but she could hardly absent herself, save upon some

plea of indisposition, which would have been certain to keep Rose at home, or to spoil her pleasure. To Cecil it was a day of reprieve, which to some minds, at least, is preferable to the one of execution. His mind was too much preoccupied by the consideration of how events would shape themselves, when his confession should have been made, to note how Helen shrank from him; he was thinking of Ella's passion, her love for him changed to hate, and her quick thoughts bent upon revenge. He knew her well—the more shame to him for so treating her—and could calculate the force with which such a blow would strike her, and the effects it would produce. She would move heaven and earth, to right herself in the world's eyes and get him punished. She would invoke the law for certain, and when that failed, as he was well assured it would fail, she might even try other means of vengeance. She was not one to sit down quiet under so cruel an injury. He did not think it impossible that, in her wild rage, she might even play the Eleanor to his fair Rosamond. Then he pictured to himself his Rose's anguish with all the pillars of domestic peace in ruins about her; and his heart sank within him. His punishment had indeed begun.

It was so far fortunate that, in consideration of the excursion having been planned in Rose's honour, the vicar, for once, paid her peculiar attention, and left Helen in Cecil's charge; otherwise Rose must needs have noticed her husband's gloomy looks and absent air. To Helen, who guessed the cause only too well, his silence during the railway journey was welcome, since it permitted her to think her own sad thoughts without molestation. At the river-side, however, the vicar had prepared some compensation for himself. Instead of a large boat for the accommodation of the party, he had bespoken two skiffs, in which they were to row some miles down the stream, and dine at a certain house of entertainment. It would never do, he said, to separate bride and bridegroom; so Helen was to go with him, and Rose with her husband. Under other circumstances, Cecil would have accepted this arrangement willingly enough; he much preferred his wife's company to that of her sister, for whom he entertained an intuitive dread, which did not, however, prevent him from slyly bantering her on the subject of the vicar's devotion. On this occasion, however, he was in no

mood for banter; but took the place assigned to him without a word.

He was a good oarsman, but the sculls felt in his hand like lead, as he pulled out from shore. Rose, on the contrary, was full of spirits. She had never been on the water with him before, or seen him in the boating-dress which became him so admirably. The wooded reach, down which they sped so swiftly, delighted her with its unaccustomed charms. The changing leaf from its fiery red to soberest brown, walled them in on both sides with its varied tapestry; above them was the autumn sky with its isles of fleecy cloud. Hamlet and hall, church and mill, the sounding lasher and the echoing lock, were feasts to her eye and ear; and when her glance, surfeited with the gorgeous panorama, sought some more quiet bliss, it rested on her husband.

"How soft and soothing is the very motion of the boat, and all these sights and sounds," said she to Cecil. "It seems almost a sin to talk."

"That is not everybody's feeling," answered he, smiling. "Listen!"

He poised the oars upon the rowlocks and let the skiff glide on, when, instantly, a far-off sound of talk and laughter broke upon their ears.

"There is a merry party on ahead. What is it, Rose?"

Rose, of course, was looking forward, and he the other way; a bend of the river had hitherto concealed these persons from her view, but now she caught sight of them.

"There is a large pleasure-boat full of people," said she. "And it has six oars. What a pace they go!"

"I think we can catch them, however, before they reach the lock," observed Cecil, looking round.

"Welby, can you spurt?" cried he to the vicar, whose skiff was but a few yards behind them.

"Try me," answered the other, with a slight ring of boastfulness in his tone.

He was not so young as Landon, but, in his college-days, the vicar had cloven the waters of that very river with no little credit to himself and his college-club. That "Try me" in fact was the acceptance of a challenge, and no sooner had the words been uttered than both skiffs began to fly. For the sense of speed and the delight that accompanies it, there is nothing like "spurting"—to the steerer—and Rose was in the seventh heaven of happiness.

"The boat ahead has quickened its stroke," cried she, clapping her hands with glee. "We are going to have a race with them too."

In the way of emulation—else so many husbands would not be ruined—the female is even more greedy of triumph than the male.

A six-oared boat, with four ladies in it under an awning, has commonly but a small chance, even with a start, against a skiff, with one lady and no awning, rowed by a powerful oarsman; but in the present case the six were picked men—young gentlemen from London, whose home in summer was on the river, and whose hearts were there even when the claims of the law, the public service, or of their relations, called them elsewhere. On this occasion, in presence of their ladies, these cavaliers acquitted themselves to admiration; and Rose beheld the awning raised and more than one fair flushed face look forth, to mark the progress of the pursuers. As for Cecil, he was "putting his back into it," and saw nothing but his own knees.

The three boats reached the lock-gates, opened wide for their reception, almost at the same instant; and then, of course, the respective athletes ignored the existence of their rivals, and looked—or rather tried to look, for they were hot, breathless, and "pumped out"—as though there had been no race at all. The six-oared boat took one side of the lock and the skiffs—that of Landon being in advance of the rector—the other; the men holding by the chains as the waters sank. If the gentlemen ignored one another, however, the ladies made up for it, by scanning each other very narrowly; not a feature of Rose's or Helen's, not a brooch, nor a bow, nor a stray lock of their hair, escaped the notice of the tenants of the awning; and though the two sisters were less curious in their behaviour, it is probable they could have made out a pretty exact inventory of their late rivals and their apparel after the first half-second.

One lady of the four especially attracted Rose's attention; she was of dark, indeed, almost Spanish, complexion, and of great beauty; her dress, though a little too handsome for the occasion, was in excellent taste. But it was neither her personal charms, nor her apparel, which riveted Rose's gaze; but the way in which she stared at Rose's husband. Just as Helen had seen them in Darall's face at church the preceding day, so now Rose marked Incredulity, Astonishment, Horror,

arise in this woman's, and finally uncontrollable Passion—the rage of the tigress. Landon, as I have said, was busy with his lengthening chain and with keeping the frail boat away from the wet wall, and observed nothing of this, until presently a voice rang through the echoing lock, startling every ear, and chilling him to the very marrow—"Cecil!"

He turned his face—a moment before aglow with toil, but now aghast with fear—and met Ella's piercing eyes.

"Cecil!"

She had repeated his name, but still he answered nothing. His tongue clove to the roof of his mouth; his despairing eyes sought the dark waters, as though beneath them alone were to be found release and escape. Yet he was somehow conscious—perhaps he saw her reflection in the stream—that Ella was standing up and pointing to Rose.

"Cecil! Who is that woman?"

Then with a sharp pain he looked up at Rose. Pale as a river lily, she sat confronting Ella, and in a firm quiet voice replied:

"I am his wife, madam."

"His wife? Then who am I? I speak to you, sir."

Cecil was well aware she spoke to him. He also knew that the lock-gates were opening behind him, and giving, as it seemed, a glimpse of light and life. Up to that time he had felt like a rat in a hole, but without the pluck of the rat. Now there was freedom—for the moment at least—before him; he thrust the skiff from the wall, plunged his sculls into the water, and shot out into the sunlight like an arrow from a bow. No confession of defeat and guilt could have been more complete; and poor Rose fell back in her seat—which was fortunately fenced round, as usual, like an arm-chair—and fainted away.

The air and her quick motion through it, however, revived her, and she presently came to herself, though only with a dim consciousness of what had happened.

Cecil, on the other hand, had by that time summoned all his wits about him, and met her wondering glance with an affectionate smile.

"You are better now, darling, are you not? I am so deeply sorry for what has happened!"

"What has happened?" sighed she; then, with a deep flush she added, "Ah! that woman! I remember now. She called you 'Cecil'—said she was your wife."

"Yes, dear; she did. But it was all untrue."

"All?"

"Well, no; not all, of course, love. I have behaved very ill; but that was before I knew you, Rose."

It was curious, considering the base subterfuges to which he had already sunk, that Cecil thus shrank from saying anything to Ella's disparagement. To do him justice, it was quite as much remorse as fear that had kept him silent under her questioning in the lock. When she had cried out to him, on Rose's saying that she was his wife, "Then, who am I, sir?" he had not had the heart—that is to say, he had lacked the brutality as well as the courage—to deny the tie between them. Rose's simplicity and ignorance of the world were such that she had, hitherto, imagined that no image of another woman had ever occupied the place of her own in her husband's breast. She had imagined it to be a sort of sanctuary, which had remained pure and void until he saw her, and set her up in it as its idol. But now that she perceived this had not been the case, she at once grasped the fact that men in general are far from being immaculate. It was out of the question that her husband should be an exception, save upon the side of virtue; it was evident, therefore, that he had given way to vice under a great temptation. She was not angry with him, as some women would have been, for taking all the blame upon himself, and saying nothing against his seducer; but she was by no means more inclined upon that account to take a charitable view of the young person in the six-oared galley. Her impudence had certainly been beyond all belief; but then young persons of that description must necessarily be impudent; nor was Rose even without a suspicion that poor Ella was intoxicated. Perhaps, what annoyed Rose most, was the fact that this unfortunate and amazing rencontre had taken place in the presence of her sister and Mr. Welby.

Neither spoke again till they drew near a pretty riverside inn, about a mile below the lock. Then Cecil mildly said:

"We are to get out here, love."

"Why?" cried Rose, with a little shudder, and a half-glance behind her.

She would have preferred him to row on at the same rate for an indefinite time,

so as altogether to distance that six-oared galley, with the young person in it who called her husband "Cecil."

"We are to dine here, darling," said he persuasively.

"Dine!" she echoed, not scornfully, but with the air of one who never looks to enjoy dinner again. Perhaps, thought she, the occupants of that galley were about to dine there also, a notion that made her shiver.

However, she got out, and they were ushered into the sitting-room that had been prepared for them. It looked on to the river, of course, which was itself an element of horror; and in a minute or two the measured stroke of the six-oared boat was heard, as it came down the stream.

Rose, seated on the sofa, as far from the window as possible, grew once more deadly pale; she had taken up some newspaper to hide her face from the waiter, and Cecil noticed how it trembled in her hand. Then his eyes turned to the mirror above the mantelpiece; the brightly-painted boat, with its gay-coloured awning, which happily hid those beneath it, crossed its surface like a glittering pageant seen in a magic glass—for him full of baleful menace—and passed away in a breath.

Landon drew a deep sigh of relief.

"Has it gone by?" asked Rose, in a tremulous whisper.

"Yes, dearest; it has gone by."

Then came the beat of sculls; and in the mirror Cecil saw pale Helen, and the vicar with troubled brow. It was, above all things, necessary that he should make his peace with Rose before those others came.

"Can you not forgive me, darling?" he whispered tenderly.

"I have forgiven you," she answered. "Let us forget it. Never let us speak of it more."

He kissed her, but said nothing; his heart misgave him that that last wish was vain indeed; that this evil day was but the beginning of troubles. But it was something to have obtained her pardon.

The next moment their two companions entered the room.

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